International Seabed Authority ISBA/21/A/INF/2

Assembly

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Request for observer status in accordance with rule 82, paragraph 1 (e), of the rules of procedure of the Assembly on behalf of the Sargasso Sea Commission

Note by the secretariat

1. The secretariat of the International Seabed Authority was invited by the Government of Bermuda to attend the signature of the Hamilton Declaration on Collaboration for the Conservation of the Sargasso Sea, on 11 March 2014. The Hamilton Declaration is a non-binding arrangement which, to date, has been signed by the Governments of the Azores, Bermuda, Monaco, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. Its aim is to provide a framework for intergovernmental collaboration for the conservation of the high seas areas of the Sargasso Sea.

2. Pursuant to paragraph 6 of the Hamilton Declaration, the Sargasso Sea Commission was appointed by the Government of Bermuda in August 2014. The Commission is established under Bermudian law and based in Bermuda. It is assisted by a secretariat and its mandate is described in annex II to the Hamilton Declaration.

3. On 26 May 2015, the Executive Secretary of the Commission addressed a letter to the Secretary-General of the Authority requesting the status of observer in the Assembly of the Authority (see annex).

4. In accordance with rule 82, paragraph 1 (e), of the rules of procedure of the Assembly, non-governmental organizations with which the Secretary-General has entered into arrangements in accordance with article 169, paragraph 1, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and other non-governmental organizations invited by the Assembly that have demonstrated their interest in matters under the consideration by the Assembly may participate as observers in the Assembly.

5. Paragraphs 5 and 6 of the same rule provide that observers referred to in paragraph 1 (e) of that rule may sit at public meetings of the Assembly and, upon the invitation of the President and subject to the approval by the Assembly, make oral statements on questions within the scope of their activities, and that written

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statements submitted by observers referred to in paragraph 1 (e) of that rule within the scope of their activities that are relevant to the work of the Assembly should be made available by the secretariat in the quantities in the languages in which the statements are submitted.

6. The Assembly is invited to grant observer status to the Sargasso Sea Commission, pursuant to rule 82, paragraph 1 (e), of its rules of procedure.

Annex

Letter dated 26 May 2015 from the Executive Secretary of the Sargasso Sea Commission addressed to the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

The Sargasso Sea Commission would like to request observer status at meetings of the International Seabed Authority, in accordance with rule 82 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly of the Authority.

From its origins, the Commission has forged a strong relationship with the Authority. The secretariat of the Authority was invited by the Government of Bermuda in Hamilton to participate as an observer in the official signature of the Hamilton Declaration on Collaboration for the Conservation of the Sargasso Sea, on 11 March 2014. The Hamilton Declaration is a non-binding arrangement, which currently has been signed by the Governments of the Azores, Bermuda, Monaco, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

The aim of the Hamilton Declaration is to provide a framework for intergovernmental collaboration to promote measures through existing international and regional organizations for the purposes of conserving the unique ecosystem of the Sargasso Sea for present and future generations. The majority of the Sargasso Sea open-ocean ecosystem lies in areas beyond national jurisdiction. The Sargasso Sea has been described as an ecologically or biologically significant area under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Pursuant to paragraph 6 of the Hamilton Declaration, the first Sargasso Sea Commission was appointed by the Government of Bermuda in August 2014. The Commission is established under Bermudian law and is assisted by a secretariat. While the Commission has no management authority, it is mandated under annex II of the Hamilton Declaration to exercise a stewardship role for the Sargasso Sea and keep its health, productivity and resilience under continual review and to develop a work programme and action plans for the conservation of the Sargasso Sea ecosystem. The United Nations General Assembly has officially noted the efforts of the Sargasso Sea Alliance (predecessor of the Commission), both of which have been led by the Government of Bermuda, to raise awareness of the ecological significance of the Sargasso Sea.

The Authority is the competent organization through which States parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea organize and control activities in the Area, particularly with a view to administering the mineral resources of the Area, as defined in article 1, paragraph 1 (1), of the Convention. In the Area, the seabed itself also hosts various distinct habitats and ecosystems, and many of these are important parts of the Sargasso Sea's biodiversity.

The Commission is already working to develop systems for monitoring and assessing the health of the Sargasso Sea ecosystem, in collaboration with a range of Governments and intergovernmental organizations.

The Commission would welcome the opportunity to participate more actively in relevant discussions, workshops and initiatives of the Authority. We look forward

to the favourable consideration of this request for observer status by the Assembly at its next session.

(*Signed*) David **Freestone**
Executive Secretary
Sargasso Sea Commission